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An Emergent Literary Theory: The Darker Haptic Counterpart

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A stack of approximately ten books of various thicknesses and colors (white, yellow, blue, brown) is positioned on the right side of the slide. The books are stacked horizontally, with their spines facing right. The background is a light blue gradient.


An Emergent Literary Theory: The Darker Haptic Counterpart

Honors Capstone Presentation: Micala Nitz

Major: English Literature with a Teaching Endorsement

Advisor: Katherine Anderson

What is an emergent literary
theory?



Emergent Literary Theory: a theory that is rooted in literary study that is still being developed, researched, and refined



Agenda

- Project background
- Theory introduction
- Key terms/relevant history
- Application of DHC theory
in *Armadale*
- Racial implications
- Future plans

Darker Haptic Counterpart Theory

- Time period: Victorian Era
- Author: Wilkie Collins
- Disciplines: Literature, history, psychology, sociology, philosophy (phenomenology), and anatomy





Project Background

- English Literature major and (almost) History minor
 - Teaching endorsement
- Professor/Advisor Katherine Anderson
- Began as research paper
- After graduate school, expanded into thesis topic

Darker Haptic Counterpart Theory

The myth of the doppelganger and its depictions in Victorian literature imply a darker/antagonist half and a lighter/protagonist half through haptic signifiers. Plot resolution is only reached through the darker haptic counterpart's exile or assimilation from foreign identity to British nationality, **which reasserts harmful imperialist narratives.**

Critical Application of Theory

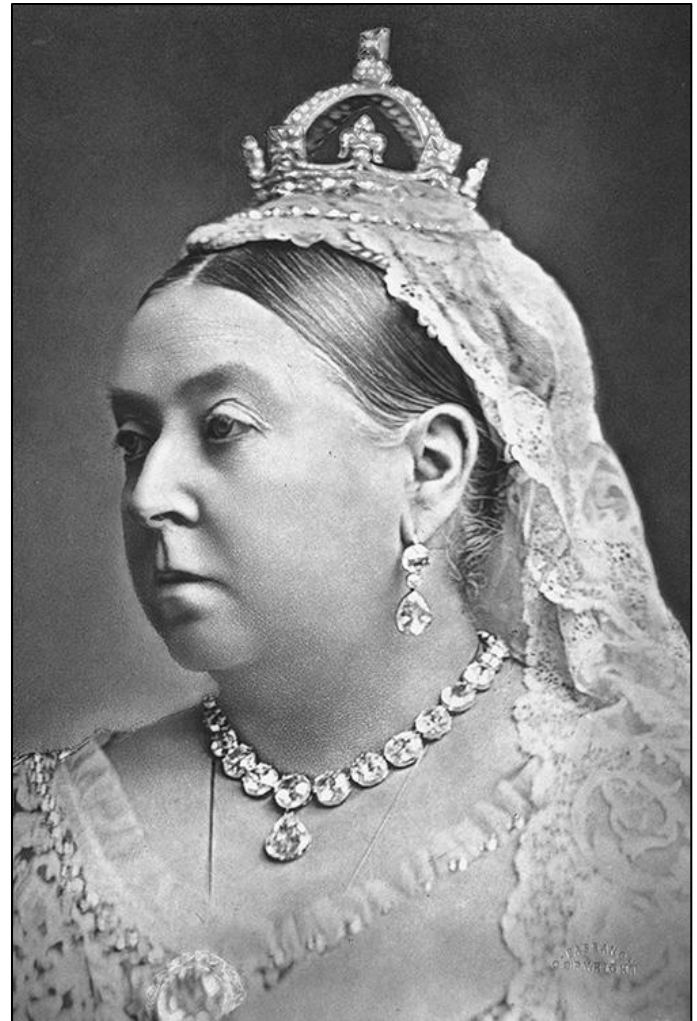
This theory can be used to recognize and critique how authors' treatment of the darker/lighter haptic counterparts **reasserts harmful British imperialist narratives.**

Key Terms

- Victorian Era
 - Habitus/Haptic
 - Doubling/Doppelganger
 - Shadow Theory
-

Victorian Era:

- Named after Queen Victoria
- 1837-1901 in the United Kingdom
- Imperialism





Imperialism

- A policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.
 - “The sun never sets on the British Empire”
- Oppressive force

Many people groups who were colonized underwent:
“Torture, mutilation, and kidnapping”



Imperialist Economy

- Globalized economy & foreign commodity
 - Coffee, natural resources, jewels/gems
- Dependency on close contact with foreign lands and people groups
- Physical boundaries rendered obsolete for identification

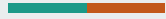
“The body became the center of
anxious elaboration of the human”
(*Victorian Skin*)



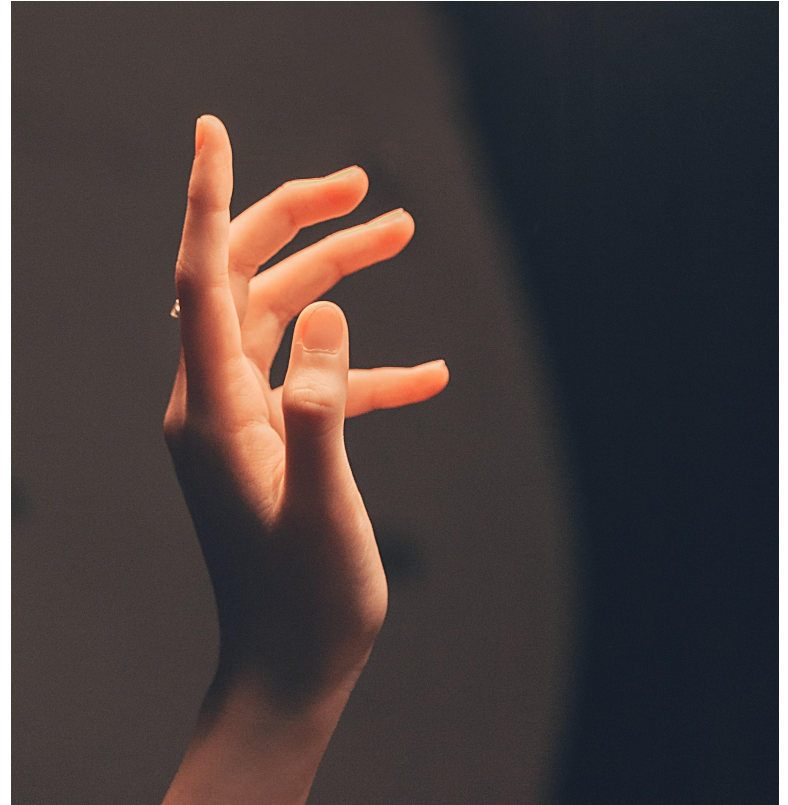
The British Body

- Without physical distance, the body became the site of identification
 - Linking the physical self to an internal, moral one
- Scientific publications on human anatomy
 - Increased classification

Habitus/Haptic:



- Pierre Bourdieu
- Socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions. It is the way that individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it





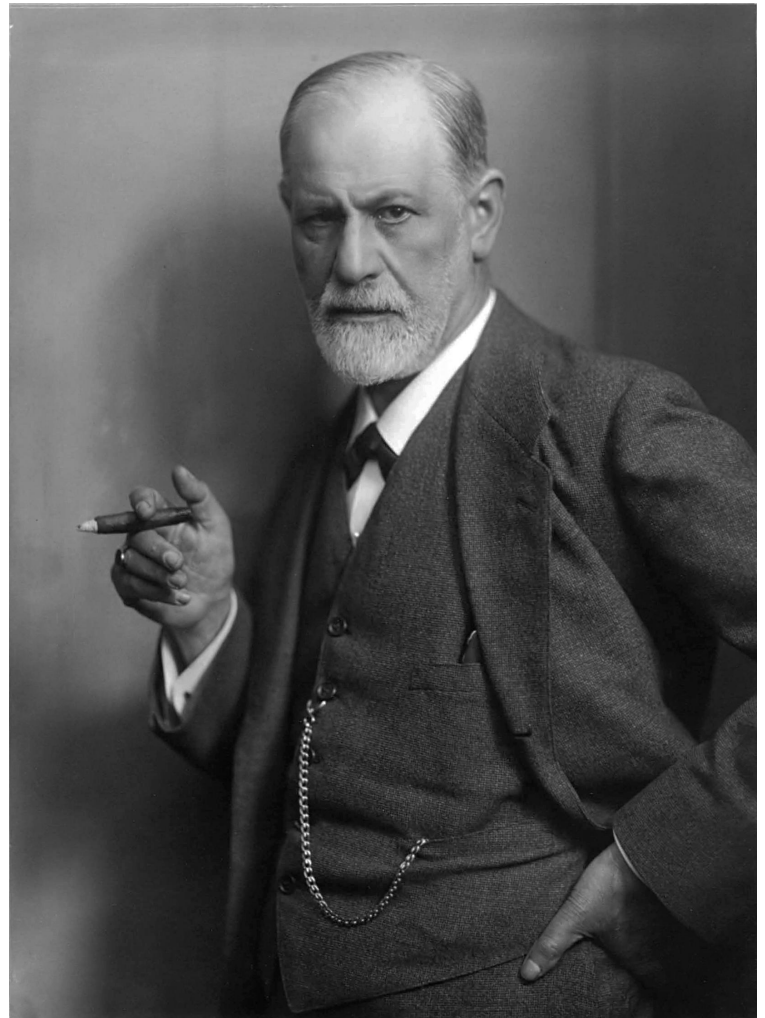
Simplified Habitus Definition

- The relationship between an external state and the internal self
- Often linked these to establishing collective identities
 - Class, race, nationality, etc.

“These dispositions are usually shared by
people with similar backgrounds”

Double/ Doppelgänger:

- Sigmund Freud
- “The central premise of the **doppelgänger motif** poses the paradox of **encountering oneself as another**; the logically impossible notion that the **‘I’ and the ‘not-I’ are somehow identical.**”





Doppelganger in Victorian Fiction

- The Gothic genre
 - Anxiety around the body both identifying us and confusing us with an other
- Experimentation with relationship between body and identity
- **Doppelgangers**
 - *Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, Tale of Two Cities*
 - “A hallmark of British fiction”

Doppelganger Distinctions

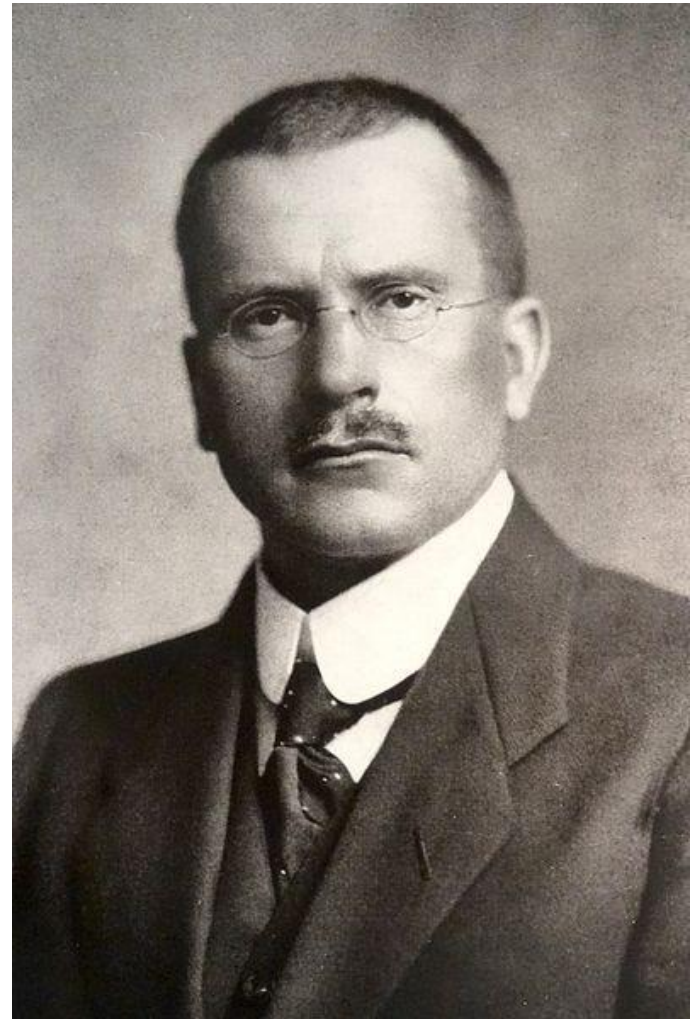
(1) **the alter ego or identical double of a protagonist** who seems to be either a victim of an identity theft perpetrated by a mimicking supernatural presence or subject to a paranoid hallucination

(2) **the split personality or dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed monster that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of the self.**

Shadow Theory/Jung

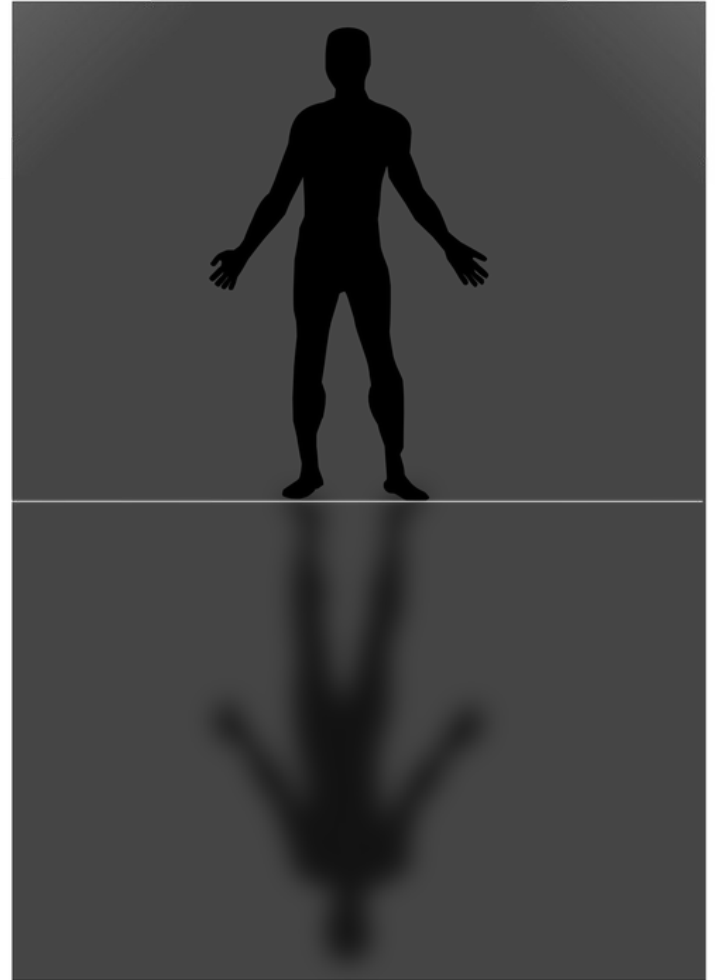


- Carl Jung
- The shadow is one example of an **"unconscious personality"** which possesses a certain measure of autonomy



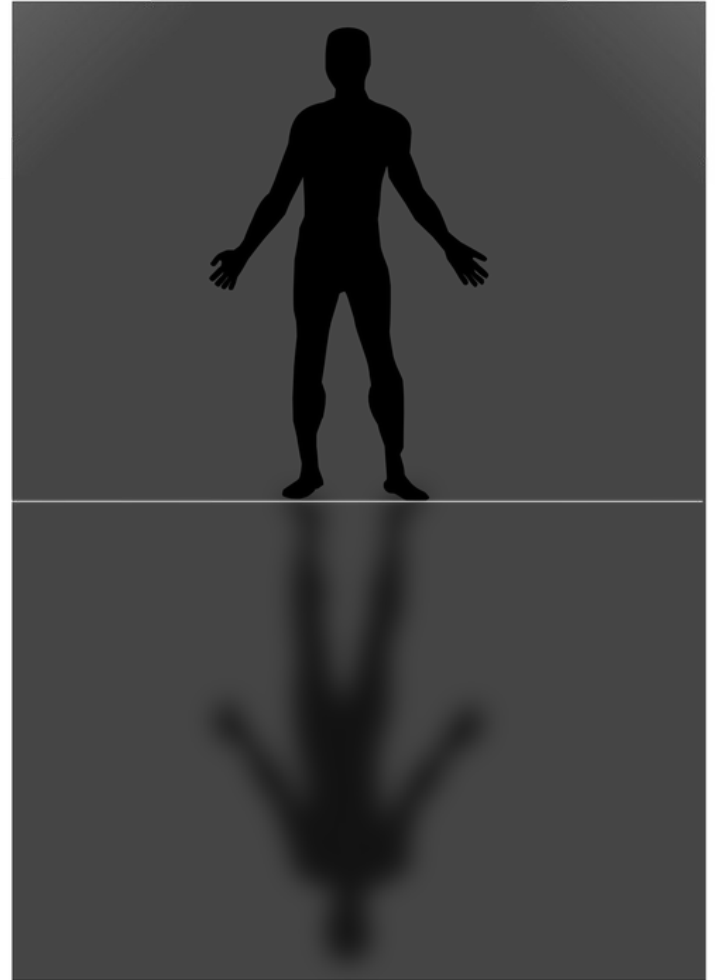
Shadow Theory/Jung

- **The shadow is the self** that we reject and project onto others
- Project onto our shadow the qualities we cannot acknowledge or have rejected in ourselves: “greed, intolerance”
- We are not separate from our shadow, we just think we are

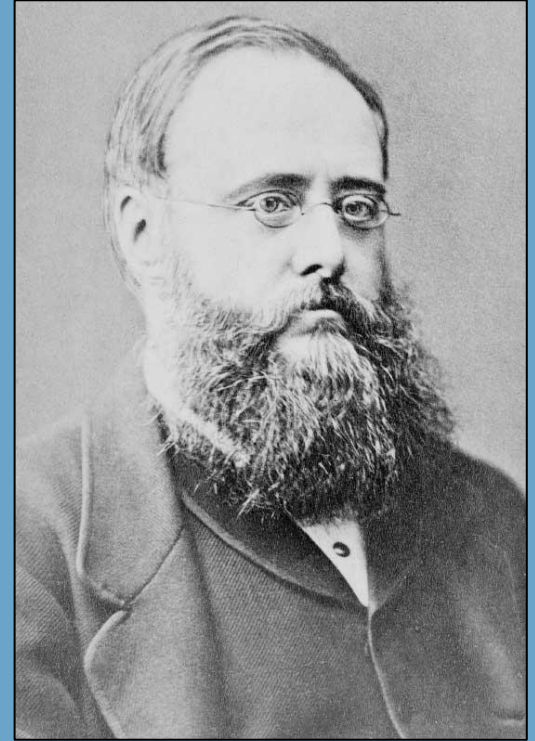


Shadow Theory/Jung

- Associate the shadow with **fear, hate, dislike**, and base **difference** from us
 - We fear identification with the shadow will mean **a loss of our own identity**
- This means we see neither ourselves or the other clearly
 - **Sanctify the self, condemn the shadow**



“Doubles—both physical and psychological—fascinated Wilkie Collins, and doubled identities, in one version or another, appear in all of his novels.”



Wilkie Collins

“Collins is universally acknowledged as the master of the Victorian sensation novel” (WTW xvi).



Collins Overview

- 1824-1889
- English novelist (fiction, sensationalist, drama, serial)
- Most prominent works published from late 1850s-early 1870s
 - *The Moonstone*: first British detective novel
 - *Woman in White*: peak of his fame
- Friend of Charles Dickens
 - Published in *All the Year Round* and *Household Words*

Doubled Domesticity

- Two separate households
- Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd (common law wife)
- Very public with this information
 - “Unlike other eminent Victorians, he was not a hypocrite about his private life.”



Caroline Graves (1830-1895)



Collins' Doubles

- *Armada* (1866), *The Moonstone* (1868), *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), *The Woman in White* (1859)
- Rather than connecting doubles just physically or morally, Collins uses habitus to connect them through both
- Uses physical, external signifiers and habits to indicate a moral, internal relationship between the two

Darker Haptic Counterpart Theory

The myth of the doppelganger and its depictions in Victorian literature imply a darker/antagonist half and a lighter/protagonist half through haptic signifiers. Plot resolution is only reached through the darker haptic counterpart's exile or assimilation from foreign identity to British nationality, **which reasserts harmful imperialist narratives.**



Darker Counterpart Elements

1. A pair of doubles
2. Haptic difference/comparison between the doubles
3. One's habitus linked to lighter colors and "domestic" signifiers one's habitus linked to darker colors and "foreign" signifiers
4. Resolution through redemption of the darker haptic counterpart, in the form of assimilation to British nationality

Armada (1866)

Plot summary:

- The pair of doubles: Allan Armadale and Allan Armadale (Ozias Midwinter)
- Allan inherits wealth and station due to his namesake, ignorant of his counterpart
- Midwinter grows up in poverty due to his lack of claim over his birth name, befriends Allan with the knowledge of who he is and vows to protect Allan



Darker Counterpart Elements

Armadale

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4. Plot resolution through the darker haptic counterpart's assimilation to British nationality



Allan Armadale

- “His disposition was open as the day; a more **generous, affectionate, sweet-tempered** lad would have been hard to find anywhere.”
- “A **natural healthiness** in all his tastes carried free of most of the dangers.”
- “He had a **thoroughly English** love of the sea.”
- “[Midwinter] followed Allan, like a dog.”



Ozias Midwinter

- “His tawny complexion, his large bright brown eyes, and his black beard, gave him something of a **foreign look.**”
- “His long supple, sinewy fingers, wasted by suffering, till they looked **like claws.**”
- “The toes on one of his feet...grasped at the chair-rail through his stocking, with the **sensitive muscular action** which is only seen in **those who have been accustomed to go barefoot.**”
- “He habitually slept the light suspicious sleep of a man who has been accustomed to close his eyes in doubt of the company under the same roof with him.”
- “I bit him, like the **wild animal** I was!”



Haptic Contrast

- “For years and years, **the life of a wild animal**—perhaps I would to say, **the life of a savage**—was the life [Midwinter] led while [Allan was] **at home and happy**.”
- “The **strange contrast** of character between them which he had noticed already, was impressed on his mind more strongly than ever.”
 - Allan: “sat at the well-spread table, **hungry and happy**...declaring that he had never made such a breakfast in his life.”
 - Midwinter: “sat by the window; his cup **thanklessly deserted** before it was empty, his meat left **ungraciously half eaten** on his plate.”



Color Contrast

- “I may be the wife of the **dark Allan Armadale**, known as such to nobody by my husband and myself; and I may, out of that very position, claim the character of widow of the **light Allan Armadale**.”
- “**Allan the Fair** doesn’t know he has a namesake. And **Allan the Dark** has kept the secret from everybody but the clergyman and myself.”
- “**Shadows** remind me of **Midwinter**.”



Darker Counterpart Elements

Armada

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Darker Haptic Counterpart's “Resolution”

- “Everything that he had noticed above stairs...associated the **danger that lay hid with Allan's room.**”
- Midwinter takes Allan's place, **sacrificing** himself; a decision that was made “”in the work of an instant.”
 - “The great nature of the man intuitively freed itself.”
- “You have saved Armadale by changing rooms with him tonight...**angel!**”

Priti Joshi's Theory for British Nationality:

- Investment in Domesticity - Midwinter's marriage
- Sacrifice - Midwinter swapping places with Armadale

*"Mutiny Echoes: India, Britons, and Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities"



Resolution

- Haptic pair reconciled
 - “There was no parting them.”
 - “Midwinter and Mr. Armadale are together.”
- Second chance at life
 - “I, too, am standing hopefully on the brink of a new life, and that while we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again.”
 - **“The darkness had passed. The first light of the new day met him as he looked out, and rested tenderly on his face.”**



Darker Counterpart Elements

Armada

1. A pair of doubles
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3. One's habitus linked to lighter colors and "domestic" signifiers one's habitus linked to darker colors and "foreign" signifiers
4. Resolution through redemption of the darker haptic counterpart, in the form of assimilation to British nationality

Implications & Underpinnings:

Critique, race, theory

Critical Application of Theory

This theory can be used to recognize and critique how authors' treatment of the darker/lighter haptic counterparts reasserts problematic British imperialist narratives.

How it reasserts the British imperialist narrative:

- Consistent ending for the darker haptic counterpart of either erasure/exile or assimilation to British identity.
- The sense of closure provided by this consistent ending tries to legitimize problematic imperialist practices which marginalize and oppress the dozens of nations and people groups occupied by British forces.

Problematic Race Depictions

- Contextual frameshift
 - Wilkie Collins was a **critic of imperialism**
 - Progressive for Victorian audiences
 - His characterizations still hold deeply racist and harmful depictions **for our time and modern audiences**
- Association of darker features
 - **Perpetuates a good/bad dichotomy of light/dark**
 - **Erasure of foreign culture and peoples**
 - Assimilation to imperialist forces
 - Broad terms/assumptions and little cultural nuance besides “foreign”

Frameshifts in Future Development

- Cases of light/British habitus associated with malevolent characters
 - Complicating light/dark narratives of good/evil
 - *Poor Miss Finch* and *The Moonstone*



Darker and Lighter Counterparts, printed in serial edition of *Poor Miss Finch* novel

Frameshifts in Future Development



- “In the dreams of Europeans, the shadow appears usually as dark-skinned, alien or primitive.”
 - For Europeans, the darker counterpart is the body that they fear identification with, **because acknowledgement of their sameness feels like a threat to their culture/imperialist practices**
 - Dependent on oppression of the shadow
- Description of Midwinter as the reminder “of a shadow”

Frameshifts in Future Development



- Jung's Shadow Theory
 - “If [our connection to our “shadow,” which is the parts of ourselves we reject and project onto others] is repressed and isolated from consciousness, **it never gets corrected**, and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness.”
- Seeing the Darker Haptic Counterpart (and darker bodies in general) as extensions of the self that **we are all better** for correcting our prejudice against, not as a shadow to be erased or assimilated

Future plans and hopes for theory:

1. Better understand and critique heavily taught and circulated literature through a 21st century lens
2. Find ethical and honoring ways to talk about race and prejudice that we still wrestle with through a literary lens
3. Apply to a larger data set (read more books)



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Thank you!
Questions?

